

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 610

By Burchett

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Sergeant Major Mildred Catherine Kelly, United States Army, Retired.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Sergeant Major Mildred Catherine Kelly; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Major Kelly was an exemplary public servant and consummate military officer who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for her fellow citizens in numerous capacities; through her many years of service in the United States Army, she put aside her personal needs and concerns in order to ensure our individual and collective freedoms; and

WHEREAS, she served with acumen and alacrity for nearly 30 years in the United States Army, winning the respect of enlisted personnel, her fellow officers, and her superiors alike for the exemplary quality of her work and earning the gratitude of a nation for her heroism in the ceaseless struggle to defend the American way of life; and

WHEREAS, Mildred Catherine Kelly was born in Chattanooga, the second of three children born to Maxine Denver and Willie Elliott Kelly; upon her graduation from Howard High School, she moved to Knoxville where she attended Knoxville College, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and Mathematics; and

WHEREAS, while attending Knoxville College, she was an honor student, a member of the Lady Bulldogs Basketball team, and three-year Director of the Cheerleading squad; and

WHEREAS, upon graduation, Ms. Kelly taught in Knoxville for three months before enlisting in the United States Army, to the great surprise of her friends; and

WHEREAS, she received basic training at Fort Lee, Virginia, and was first posted at Fort Knox, Kentucky; she served in a variety of assignments and was posted overseas to Japan, where she served as a Personnel Sergeant; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Major Kelly returned home in 1956, but she reenlisted in the Army in 1959 and continued to serve her country in a variety of positions; and

WHEREAS, in 1972, while working at the Pentagon, she became the first African-American woman to achieve the rank of Sergeant Major; and

WHEREAS, two years later, Sergeant Major Kelly achieved another milestone when she was appointed Command Sergeant Major of Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, becoming the first female to command a major installation; she served in that position until she retired from the United States Army in 1976; and

WHEREAS, upon taking her well-deserved retirement, Sergeant Major Kelly moved to Washington, D.C., and later to Maryland; not content merely to rest on her voluminous past accomplishments, she served a variety of boards, charities, and associations; and

WHEREAS, she was very active with the Washington/Baltimore Knoxville College Alumni Association, serving as President of the chapter for four years; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Major Kelly leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in military life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all of her chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional U.S. Army officer and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Sergeant Major Mildred Catherine Kelly, United States Army, Retired, reflecting fondly upon her impeccable character and her stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Sergeant Major Kelly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.